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Readings on Islam in Ladakh: Local, Regional, and International Perspectives

John Bray
International Association for Ladakh Studies, John.Bray@controlrisks.com

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Readings on Islam in Ladakh: Local, Regional, and International Perspectives

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JOHN BRAY INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR LADAKH STUDIES

READINGS ON ISLAM IN LADAKH: LOCAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

The influences of two major religions—Buddhism and Islam—are interwoven in Ladakhi history and contemporary society. However, by comparison with Buddhism, the study of Islam has often been neglected. This essay offers a reading guide as a basis for further study. It draws on a range of sources in Asian and European languages, including texts published locally in Ladakh, as well as academic monographs and articles in specialist international journals. The essay begins with a discussion of the key historical texts before looking more closely at Ladakh's links with Central Asia, and the political and cultural impact of Islam in its relationship with Baltistan and Kashmir. The essay then examines the role of Ladakhi and Kashmiri Muslims in facilitating Ladakh's diplomatic and commercial exchanges with central Tibet. It concludes with a review of recent studies on contemporary social and political developments.

For three and a half centuries the *Jamia Masjid* in Leh bazaar has borne witness to the presence of Islam in Ladakh. In Kargil, the second-largest town of the region, the overwhelming majority of the population are Shia Muslims. Whereas Ladakh's Buddhists historically have looked to Tibet as a source of religious inspiration and higher learning, its Muslims look west to Qom, Karbala and Mecca.

In recent years historians and social scientists have begun to take a closer look at many aspects of Islam in the region, and three papers reflecting these new research directions are included in this edition of *Himalaya*. Nevertheless, it remains true that the great bulk of scholarly writing on Ladakh focuses on the region's Buddhist history and culture. Much of the material on Ladakhi Muslims that does exist is scattered in obscure journal articles or rare books in a number of different languages. In this essay I review a selection of the material that has appeared to date with a particular focus on historical sources as they inform contemporary social and political developments.

The essay is based on two premises. The first is that the history of Islam and Buddhism in the region are interwoven to the extent that one cannot interpret the region as a whole without examining both. The second is that a proper understanding of Ladakh requires us to be both intensely local in our focus while at the same time scanning much wider international horizons.

STANDARD TEXTS AND EVOLVING HISTORIOGRAPHIES

On the principle that one needs to look at Ladakh as a whole before examining particular facets of its history, it is essential to start with a review of the key sources and the standard texts. In doing so, it quickly becomes apparent that there are several historiographies of Ladakh, broadly defined by language, which overlap only in part.

Historical sources

The single most important indigenous source is the *La dvags rgyal rabs* chronicle: this is a composite document dating back to the seventeenth century that reflects the perspective of Ladakh's Buddhist monarchy on the kingdom's internal history as well as its relationship with its neighbors. It affirms the legitimacy of the ruling rNam rgyal dynasty by linking it with Tibet's ancient monarchy and highlighting its support for the Buddhist Dharma.

Other key sources include royal decrees and charters; blockprint biographies of senior Buddhist figures such as Stagtshang Raspa (sTag tshang ras pa, 1574-1651), the founder of Hemis monastery; rock inscriptions; and oral history, often expressed as

folk-songs. Ladakhi sources can often be supplemented by the historical records of neighboring regions, notably Tibet and Kashmir.

Western scholarship

The first British travellers to visit Ladakh were the East Indian Company veterinary surgeon William Moorcroft (1767-1825) and his assistant George Trebeck (1800-1825): they stayed in the region for nearly two years in 1820-1822, waiting in vain for permission to travel over the Karakoram to Yarkand. Their account, published posthumously in 1841, provides an eyewitness view of Ladakh in its final years as an independent kingdom. Moorcroft had a keen eye for economic and geographical detail, as well as the political intrigues of the Ladakhi court.

Alexander Cunningham's *Ladák*, published in 1854, marks the beginning of formal Western scholarship on the region. Cunningham visited Ladakh in 1846 and 1847 in his capacity as a British military officer and went on to become the first Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India. His book is in effect a gazetteer, providing a systematic review of the region's geography, topography and economics as well as its history. His historical analysis is drawn from local documents, apparently including a version of the *La dvags rgyal rabs*, which had been summarised in Urdu for his benefit.

In the following decade the German scholar Emil Schlagintweit published the Tibetan text of the *La dvags ryal rabs* (1866), together with an initial German translation. The Moravian missionary doctor Karl Marx (1857-1891) provided an improved translation in English (1891, 1894, 1902), drawing on the advice of Tashi Stanphel (bKrashis bstan 'phel), a senior lama from Stagna monastery. However, Marx died of typhus before he was able to publish a definitive edition of the original text.

Marx's missionary successor August Hermann Francke (1870-1930) developed and expanded his earlier work, drawing on folksongs and rock inscriptions as well as the *La dvags rgyal rabs*. Francke's pioneering *History of Western Tibet* (1907) is long out-dated in the light of more recent research but remains influential in India because of its wide availability in modern reprint editions (under a variety of titles). His most substantial historical contribution is the publication of the text and English translation of the *La dvags rgyal rabs* together a set of "minor chronicles" in the second volume of his *Antiquities of Indian Tibet* (1926).

The Italian scholar Luciano Petech in turn built on Francke's earlier work in his Ph.D. thesis on the *Chronicles of Ladakh* (1939). Petech's particular contributions included a more extensive review of complementary sources, including Mughal texts. Some 40 years after first entering the field, he revisited his earlier researches in a completely new publication, *The Kingdom of Ladakh* (1977), which draws on a broader range of Tibetan sources than had earlier been available.

Petech's 1977 study is still the most widely-cited single-volume history of Ladakh, but now needs to be supplemented by more recent scholarship in history as well as related disciplines. *Ladakhi Histories* (2005/2011), which I edited, is a collection of 23 research papers from the International Association of Ladakh Studies (IALS), including contributions from historians, art historians, linguists and anthropologists.

Modern historical scholarship in Ladakhi/Tibetan

Historically, Ladakhi Buddhists, as well as a number of Ladakhi Christians, have tended to write in a version of classical Tibetan, even though the spoken language differs widely from the written one, much as spoken Italian or Spanish differs from Latin. In India this written language is now widely known as "Bodhi" or "Bhoti."

Joseph Gergan (Yo seb dGe rgan, 1878-1946) was arguably the first "modern" Ladakhi historian. Gergan was brought up by Moravian missionaries after his father's death in 1890. In the early 1900s he worked as a Moravian schoolteacher, and in 1920 was one of the first two Ladakhis to be ordained to the Christian ministry. He served his historical apprenticeship with Francke, notably by finding and transcribing historical documents, but then emerged as a major historian in his own right. However, his *magnum opus*, the *Bla dvags rgyal rabs 'chi med gter*, was not published until 1976, 30 years after his death. His book reflects a careful evaluation of a broad range of texts.

Gergan's work has yet to be translated into English, although Petech drew on it in his *Kingdom of Ladakh*. Some of the original documents that he cited—notably royal charters and letters—are now available in an edition published by Dieter Schuh (2008). This is based on photographs of the collection of S.S. Gergan, Yoseb's son, in the 1970s and includes Roman transliterations and German translations of the texts.

Tashi Ragbias (Bkra shis rab rgyas) is Ladakh's leading contemporary historian. His *Mar yul la dvags kyi sngon rabs kun gsal me long zhes bya ba bzhugs so sgrig pa po* [History of Ladakh Called the Mirror Which Illuminates All] was published in 1984. It includes a particular focus on Buddhist history, including the foundation stories of the various monasteries in Ladakh. On a similar note, Jamyang Gyaltsen ('Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan) has written a history of Ladakhi monasteries (1995) that includes sections on the biographies of major lamas as well as the history of each institution.

Urdu-language histories

Urdu is the state language of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K): it is also the written language with which the older generation of Ladakhi Muslims from all regions are most familiar. By far the most widely cited Urdu work is Hashmatullah Khan's *Tarikh Jammun, Kashmir, Laddakh aur Baltistan* [History of Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh and Baltistan], published in 1939. Originally from Lucknow, Hashmatullah Khan was an

official in the administration of the princely state of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) and drew on both written texts, where he could find them, as well as oral narratives. His book has still not been translated into English, with the exception of the section on Baltistan, which was published in Pakistan in 1987.

Tarikh Jammun, Kashmir, Laddakh aur Baltistan remains an important source, particularly for the otherwise poorly documented history of Purig (the historical name for the region surrounding Kargil). At the IALS conference held in Kargil in 2005, it was striking to note how frequently local scholars cited it as one of their core authorities. Nevertheless, as Shahzad Bashir (2009) points out, Hashmatullah Khan's work is in itself a historical artefact, and needs to be read critically, bearing in mind the author's personal background, including his loyalty to the J&K regime.

The second major Urdu-language history is *Qadim Laddakh* (1987) by Kacho Sikandar Khan Sikandar (1917-2007). The author belonged to the former ruling family of Chiktan, which is still seen as one of the main cultural centers of the Purig region, and, like his predecessor, joined the Kashmir Administrative Service. His work draws on Hashmatullah Khan but adds further details from local folksongs and other oral sources. In a recent essay Daniela Bredi (2011) discusses his book, together with Hashmatullah Khan's, as important examples of Urdu historiography, noting that one of Kacho Sikandar's main preoccupations is to emphasise the "Kargil people's early and general conversion to Shī'ī Islam."

Abdul Ghani Sheikh, who is based in Leh, is the most prominent contemporary Urdu-language historian in Ladakh. As a representative example, his *Ladakh: Tehzeeb-o-Saqafat* (2005) is a collection of essays on Ladakhi history and prominent personalities.

Ladakhi historical writing in English

In Ladakh as elsewhere, writers who wish to reach a broader national and international audience are increasingly turning to English, and here too Abdul Ghani Sheikh is an example. His *Reflections on Ladakh, Tibet and Central Asia* (2010) brings together 22 of his English-language essays with a focus on the history of Ladakhi Muslims and their connections with Tibet and Central Asia. Nawang Tsering Shakspo's *A Cultural History of Ladakh* (2010) is likewise a collection of the author's research papers on topics including the history of Sabu village, Lama Tsultrim Nyima (Tshul 'khrims nyi ma, 1796-1872), and Ladakh's links with Baltistan. Zain-ul-Aabedin Aabedi, a third contemporary writer from Leh, has written a study of the *Emergence of Islam in Ladakh* (2009): this is largely based on secondary sources but serves as a useful introduction to its subject.

In the future, we can expect further works of historical scholarship in English from a new generation of Ladakhi research students now working on Ph.D.'s, notably at the University of Jammu and the Jawarharlal Nehru University in New Delhi.

CHARISMATIC TEACHERS

The personal history and travels of key spiritual masters plays a prominent role in the early history of Ladakhi and Tibetan Buddhism and in this respect there are many parallels with the history of Islam in the region.

Ladakhi tradition, as recorded by both Hashmatullah Khan (1939) and Kacho Sikandar (1987), relates that Mir Syed 'Ali Hamadani (d.1385), who belonged to the Kubrawi Sufi lineage, was the first Muslim teacher to make converts in Ladakh and Baltistan. As Sheikh (2009) explains in an essay on Sufism in Ladakh, he is said to have founded the mosque in Shey, the former capital of Ladakh: this is still an important pilgrimage centre and some non-Muslims offer presents and make oblations to the shrine.

However, a critical study by Wolfgang Holzwarth (1997) challenges the tradition concerning Hamadani's visit to the region, suggesting that it dates back to no earlier than the nineteenth century. He argues instead that the first Muslim teacher who is definitely known to have visited and made converts in the region was Shams ud-Din 'Iraqi, who fled to Baltistan in around 1505 during a period of persecution in the Kashmir valley. Islamic teachings then spread from Baltistan to Purig.

Shams ud-Din 'Iraqi belonged to the Nurbakshi tradition, which had been founded by Muhammad Nurbakhsh (d. 1464), a Sufi master who was born in eastern Persia and in 1423 proclaimed himself the Mahdi, the traditional Muslim messianic figure, in Khuttalan (present-day Tajikistan). Shahzad Bashir's *Messianic Hopes and Visions* (2003) traces the evolution of Nurbakhsh's own thinking and the later development of the tradition that he founded, including contemporary developments in Baltistan and Ladakh. Bashir's study presents a detailed analysis of the religious worldview of Nurbakhsh and his successors.

In an impressive monograph on *Soufisme et Politique entre Chine, Tibet et Turkestan* (2005), Alexandre Papas shows that the Naqshabandi sheikh Yusuf Khwaja travelled from Kashgar to northern India in the early seventeenth century. On the way back he stopped en route for six months and, according to a hagiographical account of his adventures, won over numerous converts through his preaching and miraculous activities. Papas (2005: 66; 2011: 272-273) suggests that this episode may have taken place in either Ladakh or Guge.

Later on, Yusuf Khwaja's son Afaq Khwaja is thought to have travelled via Ladakh to Lhasa during an enforced exile from Kashgaria in the 1670s. Legend relates while in Tibet he engaged in a magical contest with the fifth Dalai Lama (Papas 2005: 97-102; Papas 2011; Zarcone 2011). This contest had a practical outcome in that—impressed by the spiritual powers of his opponent—the Dalai Lama reportedly requested the Jungar Mongol leader Galdan Boshoqtu Khan to help restore Afaq Khwaja to his former political authority in Kashgaria. Papas's study is notable for its extensive use of Persian, Chaghatay Turkish, Uighur and Russian texts, and therefore forms a valuable complement to the Tibetan, Indian

and Western sources that are more familiar to historians of the Himalaya.

Rohit Vohra (1985) notes that a similar tradition concerning a miraculous contest between a charismatic Muslim leader and a Buddhist lama is also told in Nubra to explain the coming of Islam to Tyakshi village. In this case the lama turned himself into a dove and, following his defeat, withdrew to the Tibetan region of Purang, leaving the villagers to convert to Islam. Similar stories are told of Sufi masters elsewhere in South Asia (Digby 1990).

REGIONAL RIVALRIES

In Islam as in Tibetan Buddhism, there has never been a neat divide between the spiritual and temporal worlds, and local and regional power struggles form an important part of the context for the early history of Islam in the Ladakh region. However, Buddhist and Muslim leaders were joined in political and dynastic alliances as often as they were divided by military conflict.

Early Mughal contacts include the invasion of Ladakh by Mirza Haidar Dughlat, a cousin of the Mughal emperor Babur, whose military forces occupied Ladakh from 1532-1536. Mirza Haidar's *Tarikh-i-Rashidi* was translated into English by E. Denison Ross in 1895, and is one of the most important sources for an otherwise obscure period of Ladakhi history. Jigar Mohamad (2011) presents a helpful review of both of the *Tarikh-i-Rashidi* and of later Mughal sources.

Later in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the rulers of Skardu in Baltistan aligned themselves with the Mughal Empire, thus benefitting from Mughal support in a series of local conflicts with Ladakh. In the late sixteenth century one of these conflicts resulted in the defeat and capture of the Ladakhi king Jamyang Namgyal ('Jam dbyang rnam rgyal, r. c. 1595-1616) who is then said to have fallen in love with Gyal Khatun (rGyal Khatun) the daughter of Ali Mir Khan of Skardu.

As Georgios Halkias (2011) reminds us, Gyal Khatun was one of several "Muslim Queens of the Himalayas" whose lives are still celebrated in the folksongs of the region. Gyal Khatun is said to have been responsible for the introduction of Balti musicians to Ladakh (Sheikh 1995, Zubdevi 2009). In a study of Ladakhi instrumental music, Trewin (1990) shows how Tibetan and West Asian influences have fused in the region's musical culture (See also Noé Dinnerstein's article in this issue).

Later events in the seventeenth century underlined the vulnerabilities of Ladakh's position on the frontiers of the Mughal Empire and Tibet, and these are covered in some detail in the works of Francke (1926) and Petech (1947, 1977). In 1663, the Emperor Aurangzeb visited Kashmir and threatened Ladakh with invasion. King Deldan Namgyal (bDe ldan rnam rgyal) sent an embassy to Kashmir to forestall war: he was forced to promise to build a mosque in Leh, to read the *khutba* in the name of the emperor, to issue coins with Aurangzeb's insignia, and to send an annual tribute. The Sunni mosque in Leh was built by Shaikh Muhi ud-din in 1666/67 (Figure 1).

Ladakh suffered a second and more decisive reversal as a result of the Ladakh-Tibet-Mughal war of 1679-1684, as discussed by Petech (1947), Ahmad (1968) and Emmer (2007a). In 1683 King Deleg Namgyal (bDe legs rnam rgyal) sought the assistance of the Mughal governor of Kashmir to push back a Tibetan army that was laying siege to the royal headquarters in Basgo. The governor complied but, under the terms of the subsequent treaty with the Mughals, the king had to grant Kashmir a monopoly of the wool trade through Ladakh. He himself formally adopted Islam under the name Aqibat Mahmud Khan. It seems that neither he nor his successors actually practised Islam although Cunningham (1854) notes that in his own time soldiers from Jammu still referred to the king of Ladakh by the same name, Aqibat Mahmud Khan.

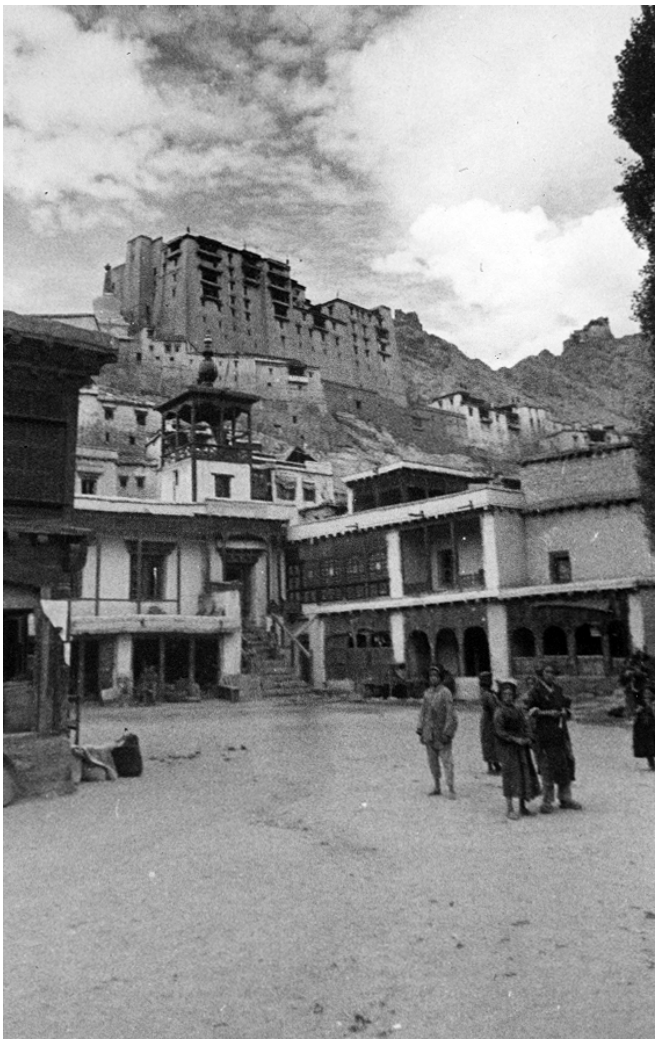


Figure 1. Leh bazaar in 1938. The 17th century Jamia Masjid in the foreground has since been rebuilt in the 'Turco-Iranian' style. Leh palace is on the hill behind. Photo: Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark, by courtesy of the Ethnographic Collections, National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen.

In 1684 Ladakh agreed to the Treaty of Temismang (gTing mo sgang) with Tibet and again the terms were onerous: the Kashmiri wool merchants' monopoly was confirmed; Ladakh ceded Rudok, Guge and Purang to the Lhasa government, and it undertook to send the triennial Lopchak (*lo phyag*) mission to Lhasa with a prescribed set of offerings for the Tibetan authorities.

TRADE AND THE KHACHE MUSLIM CONNECTION IN TIBET

As discussed in my own joint paper with Tsering D. Gonkatsang (2009), the Lopchak mission continued to play an important role in Ladakh's relations with Tibet until the 1940s. Alongside its ceremonial role, the mission was a highly profitable trading enterprise. While the formal leader of the mission was a Buddhist, Ladakhi Muslims were responsible for its practical management, and this illustrates the symbiotic relationship between the Sunni merchants of Leh and the Buddhist elite.

Long-distance trade is of course a much older historical theme in the region. A recent collection of essays on *Islam and Tibet*, edited by Anna Akasoy, Charles Burnett and Ronit Yoel-Tlalim (2011), has the subtitle "Interactions along the Musk Routes", underlining the importance of trade as a vehicle for the transmission of ideas— including medical knowledge—in both directions. For example, Assadullah Souren Melikian-Chirvani's essay in the collection traces Iranian influences on Tibetan art, and points out that the "Iran-Tibet connection" stretches as far back as the early first millennium BCE.

On a similar note, an essay by Thierry Zarcone (1996) points to the importance of the long-distance routes from Ush in the Farghana valley via Kashgar and over the Karakoram to Srinagar in the inter-regional transmission of Sufi teachings, as well as trade goods, between Central Asia and India. He argues that this route played a particularly important role in the introduction of Islam to Ladakh and Baltistan from the fourteenth century onwards.

According to oral tradition recorded by Sheikh (1995) King Jamyang Namgyal offered land to a select group of Kashmiri Muslim traders known as the *mkhar tshong pa* or "palace traders" in the early seventeenth century. In the same period or soon after, Khache (*Kha che*) Muslim traders extended their network to Lhasa (*Kha che* is the Tibetan word for Kashmir). Both in Ladakh and Tibet, the Kashmiris often married local women, thus establishing kinship networks that were both local and international. In Leh, the Muslim community descended from the children of these marriages are known as "Argons."

The particular skills of these merchants included expertise in Persian, which remained the language of international diplomacy both within India and between India and Central Asia until well into the nineteenth century. Simon Digby's 1998 article on Hajji Sayid 'Ali, who served as Moorcroft's Persian *munshi*, notes that the king of Ladakh court regarded well-travelled Persian-speaking Muslims as "trusted emissaries from the outer world, as well as sources of information about that world." A similar point applies to Tibet in its relations with India in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: both the Lhasa government and the East India Company drew on the services of Kashmiri Muslims as sources of intelligence and as bearers of sensitive diplomatic communications (Bray 2011).

One of the most engaging books on the Khache community in Tibet is Marc Gaborieau's *Récit d'un voyageur musulman au Tibet* (1973) which presents the Urdu text and French translation of a travel account written by Khwajah Ghulam Muhammad, a Kathmandu-based Kashmiri trader, at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. During that period a Ladakhi Muslim, Haji Ghulam Muhammad, was recognised as the head of the Khache community in Lhasa.

Abdul Wahid Radhu, a member of one Leh's leading Muslim families, likewise explores Ladakh's connection with Tibet in *Caravane tibétaine* (1981), which is based on English-language interviews translated into French. This is an engaging memoir of one of the last Lopchak missions to travel to Lhasa in the 1940s. It has since been re-translated into English by Gray Henry (1997). Radhu's memoir has an elegiac quality: it seems that even at the time he was conscious of being one of the last representatives of an ancient tradition.

Janet Rizvi covers both the Tibet trade and the economically more important Karakoram route in her *Trans-Himalayan Caravans* (1999), which draws on both oral testimonies and archival research. Her contribution is all the more important because many of her informants have now passed away, meaning that her research can never be replicated. Jacqueline Fewkes (2009) has followed up with an anthropological analysis of *Trade and Contemporary Society*, making extensive use of the family archives of two prominent Ladakhi traders, Bahauddin Khan and Shamsuddin Khan, between 1904 and 1948. Fewkes's work points to the possibility of further research drawing on local archival resources that have yet to be fully explored.

The trade connections linking Ladakh with Xinjiang and Tibet had already dwindled by the 1940s, and by the end of the following decade were cut off completely. The descendants of the old Ladakhi Muslim transnational trading families have been born into a completely different political and social context.

CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

In recent times as in early centuries, Ladakhi Muslims have lived out their lives against the background of wider social and geopolitical developments, both closer to home and further afield. Watershed developments in the wider region over the past half-century include:

- The partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 separated Ladakh from the neighbouring region of Baltistan. Particularly in Kargil, many Ladakhi Muslims have been cut off from close relatives on the far side of the Line of Control. Since then, India and Pakistan have fought a series of wars in 1948, 1965, 1971 and 1999. The 1999 conflict was fought over strategic mountain-top positions that commanded the Srinagar-Leh road in Kargil district.

- India fought a border war with China in 1962-63, and there is still no agreement between the two countries on the precise demarcation of the frontier in Ladakh as well as in north-eastern India. Ladakh's location on two disputed international boundaries continues to justify a large military presence.

- Since 1989, the Kashmir Valley has been caught up in a simmering conflict between the Indian security forces and would-be separatists, many of whom link their Kashmiri identity with Islam. The local politics of both Leh and Kargil are driven by a different set of agendas, but the disturbances in the Valley have cast an air of uncertainty over the political future of the whole of J&K state.

Within Ladakh, new educational and economic opportunities, notably from various kinds of government services and tourism, have led to rapid social change both in the towns and to varying degrees in the villages. These opportunities have also been a source of competition between rival groups defined by class, region and—at times—religious affiliation.

All these developments have had an impact on the way that Ladakhi Muslims see themselves, and in turn are seen by others. The overriding question, played out in different ways in different places, has been the extent to which Muslims and Buddhists see themselves as being part of a common Ladakhi community, and how far internal and external pressures are contributing to a degree of social and political polarisation.

Leh-based politics

In 1989 Leh-based Buddhists initiated a social agitation calling for Union Territory status, arguing that Ladakh should be separated from J&K and administered by the central government in New Delhi. Part of their argument was expressed in historical and communal terms: a pamphlet by the so-called People's Movement for Union Territory Status (1989) argued that Ladakhi Buddhists had always received "step-motherly treatment" from Kashmir, and that Muslims had benefited disproportionately from economic development and government jobs because of their links with co-religionists in Kashmir. The "Muslims of Leh and Kargil Districts" countered with their own pamphlet, *History Repeated in Ladakh: the Muslim Viewpoint of the Ladakhi Agitation of 1989*, arguing for a more inclusive view of Ladakhi history that represented Muslims as insiders rather than outsiders.

Dismissing this view, the Ladakh Buddhist Association (LBA) initiated a social and commercial boycott of Muslim shops and businesses that lasted from 1989 until 1992. The eventual outcome was a compromise solution whereby Leh district received a degree of political autonomy through the setting up of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council within J&K in 1995. While the establishment of the Hill Council brought a political settlement, for the time being, the fact that the 1989 agitation was built specifically on religion rather than a broader sense of Ladakhi identity, has inevitably served to widen social divisions between Buddhists and Muslims in Leh district.

Martijn van Beek and Kristoffer Brix Bertelsen (1997) focus on the 1989 agitation in an article with the appropriate title "No present without past" which traces the history of representations of "Ladakhiness" in previous decades. Bertelsen (2007) wrote an accompanying article on "Early Modern Ladakhi Buddhism" tracing the origins of Ladakhi Buddhist "nationalism" to the 1930s. Van Beek has developed his analysis of Leh politics in a series of subsequent articles (e.g. 1998, 2004). Meanwhile, Ravina Aggarwal's *Beyond Lines of Control* (2004) draws on performance studies as well as anthropological literature on boundaries to show how social and religious boundaries are created in Ladakh in the light of wider political pressures arising from its status as a frontier region.

In an essay focussing on the Argons of Leh, Emmer (2007b) draws on the work of Ashutosh Varshney (2001), a US-based social scientist who researched mixed Hindu-Muslim communities that successfully resisted communal violence during periods when other Indian towns with similar demographics succumbed to rioting. Varshney pointed to the vital peace-building role of civil society organisations with members from both communities. Applying this line of enquiry to Leh district, Emmer offers a broad historical review, and argues that the region has hitherto lacked these cross-communal civil society organisations.

Meanwhile in Kargil…

Political and social developments in Kargil have so far received much less attention from historians and social scientists, Radhika Gupta's Ph.D thesis on "Piety, Politics and Patriotism in Kargil, India" (2011) therefore makes a much-needed contribution with a detailed study of recent social developments. Her analysis exemplifies many of the themes discussed in this essay. Contemporary Kargilis are exposed to politico-religious ideologies and cultural influences from Iran, Iraq, and neighboring Baltistan. However, they are conscious of—and continually debating—the distinctive aspects of their regional culture, and at the same time engaging with Indian nationalist ideology to create a new sense of belonging.

Rural areas

Nicola Grist was the pioneer of anthropological research on rural Shia Muslims in Suru (to the south of Kargil), following up her earlier studies of Buddhist communities in the Indus valley. In one of her first articles on this theme (1995), she called for a nuanced analysis that took note both of features such as corvée labor which have been common all over the Himalayan region, as well as the distinctive features of specific Muslim communities, rather than regarding all Muslims as a single category.

In a subsequent article (1997) Grist discusses historical memories in Suru, noting that local people have now "forgotten" many of the oral histories concerning the origins of local clans that were recorded by Hashmatullah Khan in the early twentieth century. Instead, they attach more importance to the history of the region's Shia religious affiliations. Her thesis (1998) provided a detailed analysis of the Yokma-pa Shi'ite faction, showing how its agenda had shifted from its emphasis on a millenarian ideology in the 1960s to a focus on education and electoral politics and education in the 1990s.

Also in the 1990s, Srinivas (1995, 1998) analysed the mixed Buddhist/Muslim villages of Tegar and Hundar in the Nubra valley. Like Grist, she emphasises the many social characteristics shared by both Muslims and Buddhists, despite religious differences. Examining another Buddhist/Muslim community, Sheikh (2007) offers an elegiac account of Kuksho in the Purig region, pointing out that in former times villagers jointly celebrated the festivals of both religions but that relations between the two communities are now much more strained.

On a more hopeful note, Deboos (2010a, 2010b) analyses the social practices and self-perceptions of Sunni Muslims in Padum (Zangskar). She points out that local Buddhist and Muslim families are acutely conscious of the differences between them. In the recent past economic competition driven by external forces has served to widen social divisions. For example, Western travellers to the region come to experience the "Buddhist Himalaya" and this means that Zangskari Muslims find it harder to obtain jobs in Ladakh's tourist industry. Nevertheless, she argues that Padum Muslims and Buddhists retain an awareness of their shared history as well as a determination to construct a common community.

CONCLUSION: BRIDGING ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL DIVIDES

In words that could equally be applied to the study of Ladakh, the British historian Francis Robinson (2007: 1-16) celebrates both the privileges and the responsibilities of scholars studying South Asian Islam. Robinson writes of his "good fortune to be engaged with history which combines the personal and the human with themes of such excitement and grandeur." At the same time he notes the extent to which history has been politicized in South Asia over the last two decades. Like many other scholars of the Muslim world, he has "felt the need to explain both how matters have come to be as they are, and how they are not as some may wish to represent them to be."

In the future as in the past, there will inevitably be a multiplicity of historical and social research agendas in Ladakh. In order to come to a fuller understanding of "how matters have come to be as they are", scholars ideally need to be able to draw on Persian, Urdu, Tibetan and English documentary sources (as well as archaeological and art historical evidence). In practice, individual researchers tend to be masters of one or two of these languages, but rarely all four. Students of Persian and Urdu naturally incline to the Islamic world, while Tibetanists lean towards the study of Buddhism. Similarly, social scientists seeking to understand contemporary representations of the world have until now tended to focus more Islam or on the Buddhist Himalaya, but rarely both.

To point this out is not to issue a cry of despair; rather the reverse. In order to achieve a fully nuanced understanding of Ladakh, we need comparative studies as well as collaboration between different varieties of specialist, and this is a source of opportunity. In scholarship as in social reality, the excitement of Ladakh studies lies precisely in the fact that so many cultural and intellectual traditions intersect in a single region.

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